

Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten - Neil Gaiman



Fiction

What is Fiction?

Fiction texts are texts that tell an imaginative story, created from the writer's influences, experiences or simply their imagination. The text is a piece of writing influenced by ideas but is not factual.

In the same way that non-fiction texts challenge your ideas, fiction can help you to understand different cultures, worlds or times in history. We often learn how to empathise or understand people through the characters or ideas that we read in fictional texts.

As you work through the texts in this booklet, consider these questions:

- What is the purpose of this text- why was it written? Is it successful in achieving that purpose?
- Do I agree or disagree with the ideas within the piece of writing?
- How has the language or structure been crafted in a particular way? Have any particular techniques been used to make me react in a certain way? Which line of the text is the most powerful? Why is it included at that part of the text?
- What is the writer trying to get me to visualise or consider about the ideas or characters that they have included in the text?
- Why did the writer think it essential to write this text? Can I see any elements of the world that I live in within this piece of writing?
- Can I link the characters, ideas, vocabulary or structure of this text to other things that I have read? Why might they be similar?
- What have I learned from reading this? Has this text changed my views in any way?

If this booklet encourages you to read other fiction, please feel free to share these with your English teacher!

Write all notes and answers in your exercise books.

Little Women by Louisa May Alcott

Little Women was written in 1868 and is one of the most beloved children's books of all time. It is the story of the four March sisters: Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy. They live with their mother while their father is fighting in the American Civil War. The family doesn't have much money. They live next door to Mr Laurence, who is very wealthy, and his grandson, Laurie. In this passage, Beth's passion for music forces her to overcome her natural shyness. The 'Mansion of Bliss' is Mr Laurence's house.

As you read the extract, make notes on how the writer shows Beth overcoming her fear of Mr Laurence.

But Beth, though yearning for the grand piano, could not pluck up courage to go to the 'Mansion of Bliss', as Meg called it. She went once with Jo, but the old gentleman, not being aware of her [infirmity](#), stared at her so hard from under his heavy eyebrows, and said "Hey!" so loud, that he frightened her so much her 'feet chattered on the floor', she never told her mother, and she ran away, declaring she would never go there any more, not even for the dear piano. No persuasions or enticements could overcome her fear, till, the fact coming to Mr. Laurence's ear in some mysterious way, he set about mending matters. During one of the brief calls he made, he artfully led the conversation to music, and talked away about great singers whom he had seen, fine organs he had heard, and told such charming anecdotes that Beth found it impossible to stay in her distant corner, but crept nearer and nearer, as if fascinated. At the back of his chair she stopped and stood listening, with her great eyes wide open and her cheeks red with excitement of this unusual performance. Taking no more notice of her than if she had been a fly, Mr. Laurence talked on about Laurie's lessons and teachers. And presently, as if the idea had just occurred to him, he said to Mrs. March...

"The boy neglects his music now, and I'm glad of it, for he was getting too fond of it. But the piano suffers for want of use. Wouldn't some of your girls like to run over, and practice on it now and then, just to keep it in tune, you know, ma'am?"

Beth took a step forward, and pressed her hands tightly together to keep from clapping them, for this was an irresistible temptation, and the thought of practicing on that splendid instrument quite took her breath away. Before Mrs. March could reply, Mr. Laurence went on with an odd little nod and smile...

"They needn't see or speak to anyone, but run in at any time. For I'm shut up in my study at the other end of the house, Laurie is out a great deal, and the servants are never near the drawing room after nine o'clock."

Here he rose, as if going, and Beth made up her mind to speak, for that last arrangement left nothing to be desired. "Please, tell the young ladies what I say, and if they don't care to come, why, never mind." Here a little hand slipped into his, and Beth looked up at him with a face full of gratitude, as she said, in her earnest yet timid way...

"Oh sir, they do care, very very much!" "Are you the musical girl?" he asked, without any startling "Hey!" as he looked down at her very kindly.

"I'm Beth. I love it dearly, and I'll come, if you are quite sure nobody will hear me, and be disturbed," she added, fearing to be rude, and trembling at her own boldness as she spoke.

"Not a soul, my dear. The house is empty half the day, so come and drum away as much as you like, and I shall be obliged to you."

"How kind you are, sir!"

Beth blushed like a rose under the friendly look he wore, but she was not frightened now, and gave the hand a grateful squeeze because she had no words to thank him for the precious gift he had given her.

Little Women: Text-focused questions

1. Alcott writes 'But Beth, though yearning for the grand piano, could not pluck up courage to go to' Mr Laurence's house. What does the word 'yearning' mean here? Write a definition.
2. What two things does Mr Laurence do that frighten Beth?
3. What does Mr Laurence offer to the girls to go about 'mending matters'?
4. Where will everybody else be whilst the girls are playing the piano?
5. Alcott writes that Mr Laurence 'stared at her so hard from under his heavy eyebrows, and said "Hey!" so loud, that he frightened her so much'. Why does she repeat the phrase 'so much' throughout this phrase? What does it suggest about Beth's fear?
6. Beth is repeatedly shown to be frail and nervous. Find six pieces of evidence from across the text which suggests this.
7. As Mr Laurence makes his offer, Beth 'found it impossible to stay in her distant corner'. What other movements does Alcott describe which show Beth overcoming her fear of Mr Laurence?

Peter Pan by J M Barrie

The novel Peter Pan began as a play in 1904, and was made into a novel in 1911. It is the story of three English children: Wendy, John and Michael Darling. They meet the amazing Peter Pan, a boy who lives in magical Neverland. In this passage, the reader is introduced to Nana, the Darling children's nurse and nanny.

As you read the extract, make notes about your first impressions of the Darling family.

Mrs. Darling loved to have everything just so, and Mr. Darling had a passion for being exactly like his neighbours; so, of course, they had a nurse. As they were poor, owing to the amount of milk the children drank, this nurse was a prim [Newfoundland dog](#), called Nana, who had belonged to no one in particular until the Darlings engaged her. She had always thought children important, however, and the Darlings had become acquainted with her in Kensington Gardens, where she spent most of her spare time peeping into [perambulators](#), and was much hated by careless nursemaids, whom she followed to their homes and complained of to their mistresses. She proved to be quite a treasure of a nurse. How thorough she was at bath-time, and up at any moment of the night if one of her charges made the slightest cry. Of course her kennel was in the nursery. She had a genius for knowing when a cough is a thing to have no patience with and when it needs stocking around your throat. She believed to her last day in old-fashioned remedies like rhubarb leaf, and made sounds of contempt over all this new-fangled talk about germs, and so on. It was a lesson in [propriety](#) to see her escorting the children to school, walking [sedately](#) by their side when they were well behaved, and butting them back into line if they strayed. On John's footer [in England soccer was called football, "footer for short] days she never once forgot his sweater, and she usually carried an umbrella in her mouth in case of rain. There is a room in the basement of Miss Fulsom's school where the nurses wait. They sat on forms, while Nana lay on the floor, but that was the only difference. They affected to ignore her as of an inferior social status to themselves, and she despised their light talk. She resented visits to the nursery from Mrs. Darling's friends, but if they did come she first whipped off Michael's pinafore and put him into the one with blue braiding, and smoothed out Wendy and made a dash at John's hair.

No nursery could possibly have been conducted more correctly, and Mr. Darling knew it, yet he sometimes wondered uneasily whether the neighbours talked.

He had his position in the city to consider.

Nana also troubled him in another way. He had sometimes a feeling that she did not admire him. "I know she admires you tremendously, George," Mrs. Darling would assure him, and then she would sign to the children to be specially nice to father. Lovely dances followed, in which the only other servant, Liza, was sometimes allowed to join. Such a midget she looked in her long skirt and maid's cap, though she had sworn, when engaged, that she would never see ten again. The gaiety of those romps! And gayest of all was Mrs. Darling, who would pirouette so wildly that all you could see of her was the kiss, and then if you

had dashed at her you might have got it. There never was a simpler happier family until the coming of Peter Pan.

Peter Pan: Text-focused questions

1. What is unusual about the Darlings' nanny?
2. Nana is described as 'prim'. What does this word mean? Write a definition.
3. Find three more references in the text which present Nana in a similar manner to 'prim'.
4. Barrie writes that Nana 'had belonged to no one in particular until the Darlings engaged her. She had always thought children important, however, and the Darlings had become acquainted with her in Kensington Gardens.' How do the words 'engaged' and 'acquainted' help to make Nana seem a more appropriate nanny?
5. Mr Darling is repeatedly shown to be insecure and anxious over his social position. Find five pieces of evidence from the text which suggest this.
6. Barrie writes 'There is a room in the basement of Miss Fulsom's school where the nurses wait.' What tense is this written in, and how is this different from the rest of the extract? How does this help to make the story seem more realistic?
7. What does the final sentence imply about the effect of Peter Pan's arrival upon the Darling family?

The Coral Island by R M Ballantyne

One of the first novels about teenagers and also for teenagers, 'The Coral Island' was published in 1858. It is the story of three boys, Ralph, Jack and Peterkin, who are shipwrecked on an island in the Pacific Ocean. Ralph is the narrator of the story. In this extract, the three boys begin to recover from the shipwreck and consider what resources they have with them on the island.

As you read the extract, make notes on the way the writer shows the characters as isolated.

We now seated ourselves upon a rock and began to examine into our personal property. When we reached the shore, after being wrecked, my companions had taken off part of their clothes and spread them out in the sun to dry, for, although the gale was raging fiercely, there was not a single cloud in the bright sky. They had also stripped off most part of my wet clothes and spread them also on the rocks. Having resumed our garments, we now searched all our pockets with the utmost care, and laid their contents out on a flat stone before us; and, now that our minds were fully alive to our condition, it was with no little anxiety that we turned our several pockets inside out, in order that nothing might escape us. When all was collected together we found that our worldly goods consisted of the following articles:-

First, A small penknife with a single blade broken off about the middle and very rusty, besides having two or three notches on its edge. (Peterkin said of this, with his usual pleasantry, that it would do for a saw as well as a knife, which was a great advantage.) Second, An old German-silver pencil-case without any lead in it. Third, a piece of whip-cord about six yards long. Fourth, A sail maker's needle of a small size. Fifth, A ship's telescope, which I happened to have in my hand at the time the ship struck, and which I had clung to firmly all the time I was in the water. Indeed it was with difficulty that Jack got it out of my grasp when I was lying insensible on the shore. I cannot understand why I kept such a firm hold of this telescope. They say that a drowning man will clutch at a straw. Perhaps it may have been some such feeling in me, for I did not know that it was in my hand at the time we were wrecked. However, we felt some pleasure in having it with us now, although we did not see that it could be of much use to us, as the glass at the small end was broken to pieces. Our sixth article was a brass ring which Jack always wore on his little finger. I never understood why he wore it, for Jack was not vain of his appearance, and did not seem to care for ornaments of any kind. Peterkin said "it was in memory of the girl he left behind him!" But as he never spoke of this girl to either of us, I am inclined to think that Peterkin was either jesting or mistaken. In addition to these articles we had a little bit of tinder, and the clothes on our backs. These last were as follows:-

Each of us had on a pair of stout canvass trousers, and a pair of sailors' thick shoes. Jack wore a red flannel shirt, a blue jacket, and a red Kilmarnock bonnet or night-cap, besides a pair of worsted socks, and

a cotton pocket-handkerchief, with sixteen portraits of [Lord Nelson](#) printed on it, and a union Jack in the middle. Peterkin had on a striped flannel shirt, - which he wore outside his trousers, and belted round his waist, after the manner of a tunic, - and a round black straw hat. He had no jacket, having thrown it off just before we were cast into the sea; but this was not of much consequence, as the climate of the island proved to be extremely mild; so much so, indeed, that Jack and I often preferred to go about without our jackets. Peterkin had also a pair of white cotton socks, and a blue handkerchief with white spots all over it. My own costume consisted of a blue flannel shirt, a blue jacket, a black cap, and a pair of worsted socks, besides the shoes and canvass trousers already mentioned. This was all we had, and besides these things we had nothing else; but, when we thought of the danger from which we had escaped, and how much worse off we might have been had the ship struck on the reef during the night, we felt very thankful that we were possessed of so much, although, I must confess, we sometimes wished that we had had a little more.

The Coral Island: Text-focused questions

1. The opening paragraph tells the story in a non-linear order. Write the following events out in the order they actually took place: The boys put their dry clothes on; the boys took their wet clothes off in order to dry them; the boys searched their pockets for the items they had; the boys were washed ashore after the shipwreck; the boys put all of their property out upon a rock.
2. Find three pieces of evidence that the island is generally warm.
3. Ballantyne describes all of the items the boys have as their 'worldly goods'. What does the adjective 'worldly' suggest about these items and the boys' situation?
4. Ballantyne lists the items the boys have in their pockets. What is the effect of this? How does numbering each item help to give the reader an idea of the boys' situation?
5. Each item has a short description after it. What do these descriptions all have in common and how to they help to heighten the sense of isolation for the boys?
6. Ballantyne writes 'Jack wore a red flannel shirt, a blue jacket, and a red Kilmarnock bonnet or night-cap, besides a pair of worsted socks, and a cotton pocket-handkerchief, with sixteen portraits of Lord Nelson printed on it, and a union Jack in the middle.' How does this help to create a patriotic image of Jack?

The Woman in Black by Susan Hill

'The Woman in Black' was written in 1983, but mimics the style of much older Gothic horror stories from the nineteenth century. The plot concerns a small English town haunted by a mysterious spectre, the titular Woman, and foretells the death of children. Arthur Kipps, a young solicitor, is intrigued by the mystery and stays the night at Eel House, the home of the Woman in Black. In this extract, he details his first night in the house.

As you read the extract, make notes on your first impressions of Eel Marsh House.

During the night the wind rose. As I had lain reading I had become aware of the stronger gusts that blew every so often against the [casements](#). But when I awoke abruptly in the early hours it had increased greatly in force. The house felt like a ship at sea, battered by the gale that came roaring across the open marsh. Windows were rattling everywhere and there was the sound of moaning down all the chimneys of the house and whistling through every nook and cranny.

At first I was alarmed. Then, as I lay still, gathering my wits, I reflected on how long Eel Marsh House had stood here, steady as a lighthouse, quite alone and exposed, bearing the brunt of winter after winter of gales and driving rain and sleet and spray. It was unlikely to blow away tonight. And then, those memories of childhood began to be stirred again and I dwelt nostalgically upon all those nights when I had lain in the warm and snug safety of my bed in the nursery at the top of our family house in Sussex, hearing the wind rage round like a lion, howling at the doors and beating upon the windows but powerless to reach me. I lay back and slipped into that pleasant, trancelike state somewhere between sleeping and waking, recalling the past and all its emotions and impressions vividly, until I felt I was a small boy again.

Then from somewhere, out of that howling darkness, a cry came to my ears, catapulting me back into the present and banishing all tranquillity.

I listened hard. Nothing. The tumult of the wind, like a banshee, and the banging and rattling of the window in its old, ill-fitting frame. Then yes, again, a cry, that familiar cry of desperation and anguish, a cry for help from a child somewhere out on the marsh.

There was no child. I knew that. How could there be? Yet how could I lie here and ignore even the crying of some long-dead ghost?

“Rest in peace,” I thought, but this poor one did not, could not.

After a few moments I got up. I would go down into the kitchen and make myself a drink, stir up the fire a little and sit beside it trying, trying to shut out that calling voice for which I could do nothing, and no one had been able to do anything for ... how many years?

As I went out onto the landing, Spider the dog following me at once, two things happened together. I had the impression of someone who had just that very second before gone past me on their way from the top of the stairs to one of the other rooms, and, as a tremendous blast of wind hit the house so that it all but seemed to rock at the impact, the lights went out. I had not bothered to pick up my torch from the bedside table and now I stood in the pitch blackness, unsure for a moment of my bearings.

And the person who had gone by, and who was now in this house with me? I had seen no one, felt nothing. There had been no movement, no brush of a sleeve against mine, no disturbance of the air, I had not even heard a footstep. I had simply the absolutely certain sense of someone just having passed close to me and gone away down the corridor. Down the short narrow corridor that led to the nursery whose door had been so firmly locked and then, inexplicably, opened.

For a moment I actually began to conjecture that there was indeed someone—another human being—living here in this house, a person who hid themselves away in that mysterious nursery and came out at night to fetch food and drink and to take the air. Perhaps it was the woman in black? Had Mrs. Drablow harboured some [reclusive](#) old sister or [retainer](#), had she left behind her a mad friend that no one had known about? My brain spans all manner of wild, incoherent fantasies as I tried desperately to provide a rational explanation for the presence I had been so aware of. But then they ceased. There was no living occupant of Eel Marsh House other than myself and Samuel Daily’s dog. Whatever was about, whoever I had seen, and heard rocking, and who had passed me by just now, whoever had opened the locked door was not “real.” No. But what was “real”? At that moment I began to doubt my own reality.

The Women in Black: Text-focused questions

1. Hill opens the extract with ‘During the night the wind rose.’ Find two more pieces of evidence in the first paragraph which detail this increased force of the wind.
2. The house is first described as feeling ‘like a ship at sea’. What does this simile suggest about the experience of being in Eel House during the storm?
3. In the next paragraph, Hill describes the house to have stood for many years ‘as steady as a lighthouse’. How does this simile demonstrate the changing feelings about the house?
4. Hill writes ‘Then yes, again, a cry, that familiar cry of desperation and anguish, a cry for help from a child somewhere out on the marsh.’ What is the effect of repeating the word ‘cry’ in this sentence?
5. The dog is called ‘Spider’. Why do you think Hill chooses this name for the dog?
6. Hill writes ‘I had seen no one, felt nothing. There had been no movement, no brush of a sleeve against mine, no disturbance of the air’. What is the effect of repeating the word ‘no’ throughout this passage?
7. Hill uses several questions throughout this extract. How does this help to present the narrator’s thoughts as he spends the night in Eel House?

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz by Frank L Baum

The children's novel 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz' was published in 1900. It tells the story of Dorothy, a young farm girl from Kansas, USA, who is swept away in a cyclone and has magical adventures in the Land of Oz. In this extract from the opening of the novel, the reader is introduced to Dorothy and her family on their farm as the cyclone approaches.

(As this is an American novel, the colour 'grey' has been spelled as 'gray'.)

As you read this extract, make notes about how Dorothy seems to feel at this point in the text.

Dorothy lived in the midst of the great Kansas [prairies](#), with Uncle Henry, who was a farmer, and Aunt Em, who was the farmer's wife. Their house was small, for the lumber to build it had to be carried by wagon many miles. There were four walls, a floor and a roof, which made one room; and this room contained a rusty looking cookstove, a cupboard for the dishes, a table, three or four chairs, and the beds. Uncle Henry and Aunt Em had a big bed in one corner, and Dorothy a little bed in another corner. There was no garret at all, and no cellar--except a small hole dug in the ground, called a [cyclone](#) cellar, where the family could go in case one of those great whirlwinds arose, mighty enough to crush any building in its path. It was reached by a trap door in the middle of the floor, from which a ladder led down into the small, dark hole.

When Dorothy stood in the doorway and looked around, she could see nothing but the great gray prairie on every side. Not a tree nor a house broke the broad sweep of flat country that reached to the edge of the sky in all directions. The sun had baked the plowed land into a gray mass, with little cracks running through it. Even the grass was not green, for the sun had burned the tops of the long blades until they were the same gray colour to be seen everywhere. Once the house had been painted, but the sun blistered the paint and the rains washed it away, and now the house was as dull and gray as everything else.

When Aunt Em came there to live she was a young, pretty wife. The sun and wind had changed her, too. They had taken the sparkle from her eyes and left them a sober gray; they had taken the red from her cheeks and lips, and they were gray also. She was thin and gaunt, and never smiled now. When Dorothy, who was an orphan, first came to her, Aunt Em had been so startled by the child's laughter that she would scream and press her hand upon her heart whenever Dorothy's merry voice reached her ears; and she still looked at the little girl with wonder that she could find anything to laugh at.

Uncle Henry never laughed. He worked hard from morning till night and did not know what joy was. He was gray also, from his long beard to his rough boots, and he looked stern and solemn, and rarely spoke.

It was Toto that made Dorothy laugh, and saved her from growing as gray as her other surroundings. Toto was not gray; he was a little black dog, with long silky hair and small black eyes that twinkled merrily on either side of his funny, wee nose. Toto played all day long, and Dorothy played with him, and loved him dearly.

Today, however, they were not playing. Uncle Henry sat upon the doorstep and looked anxiously at the sky, which was even grayer than usual. Dorothy stood in the door with Toto in her arms, and looked at the sky too. Aunt Em was washing the dishes.

From the far north they heard a low wail of the wind, and Uncle Henry and Dorothy could see where the long grass bowed in waves before the coming storm. There now came a sharp whistling in the air from the south, and as they turned their eyes that way they saw ripples in the grass coming from that direction also.

Suddenly Uncle Henry stood up.

"There's a cyclone coming, Em," he called to his wife. "I'll go look after the stock." Then he ran toward the sheds where the cows and horses were kept.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz: Text-focused questions

8. Baum writes that the house had 'no garret at all , and no cellar'. Using your knowledge of what a 'cellar' is, what might a 'garret' be? Write a definition.
9. Re-read the extract and find all of the references to the sun. Which verbs does Baum use to describe the sun's actions? What does this suggest about the relationship between the setting and the characters in this story?
10. Baum describes many things as 'gray'. Make a list of these items, in the order they are mentioned in the text. What does this suggest about the relationship between the setting and the characters in the story?
11. Baum deliberately makes Toto and Dorothy different from Aunt Em and Uncle Henry. How does he do this?
12. Towards the end of the extract, the cyclone approaches. Find seven pieces of evidence which help to build a sense of concern and tension about this event.
13. Uncle Henry is described as a 'farmer' and Aunt Em as 'the farmer's wife'. What does this, and the time of writing, suggest about the relationship between men and women?

Hearts and Hands

William Sydney Porter, best known by his pen name O. Henry, was an American short story writer. O. Henry's short stories are known especially for their vivid characters and twist endings. In the following short story, two handcuffed men board an eastbound train in Denver, Colorado, an American state in the west. During this time period, America was just beginning to colonize the "wild west," and living out west was seen as adventurous compared to the already established east coast.

As you read, take notes on the details that Henry includes to characterize the two men on the train.

At Denver there was an influx of passengers into the coaches on the eastbound B. & M. Express. In one coach there sat a very pretty young woman dressed in elegant taste and surrounded by all the luxurious comforts of an experienced traveller. Among the newcomers were two young men, one of handsome presence with a bold, frank countenance and manner; the other a ruffled, glum-faced person, heavily built and roughly dressed. The two were handcuffed together.

As they passed down the aisle of the coach the only vacant seat offered was a reversed one facing the attractive young woman. Here the linked couple seated themselves. The young woman's glance fell upon them with a distant, swift disinterest; then with a lovely smile brightening her countenance and a tender pink tingeing her rounded cheeks, she held out a little gray-gloved hand. When she spoke her voice, full, sweet, and deliberate, proclaimed that its owner was accustomed to speak and be heard.

"Well, Mr. Easton, if you will make me speak first, I suppose I must. Don't you ever recognize old friends when you meet them in the West?"

The younger man roused himself sharply at the sound of her voice, seemed to struggle with a slight embarrassment which he threw off instantly, and then clasped her fingers with his left hand.

"It's Miss Fairchild," he said, with a smile. "I'll ask you to excuse the other hand; "it's otherwise engaged just at present."

He slightly raised his right hand, bound at the wrist by the shining "bracelet" to the left one of his companion. The glad look in the girl's eyes slowly changed to a bewildered horror. The glow faded from her cheeks. Her lips parted in a vague, relaxing distress. Easton, with a little laugh, as if amused, was about to speak again when the other forestalled him. The glum-faced man had been watching the girl's countenance with veiled glances from his keen, shrewd eyes.

"You'll excuse me for speaking, miss, but, I see you're acquainted with the marshal here. If you'll ask him to speak a word for me when we get to the pen he'll do it, and it'll make things easier for me there. He's taking me to Leavenworth prison. It's seven years for counterfeiting."

"Oh!" said the girl, with a deep breath and returning colour. "So that is what you are doing out here? A marshal!"

"My dear Miss Fairchild," said Easton, calmly, "I had to do something. Money has a way of taking wings unto itself, and you know it takes money to keep step with our crowd in Washington. I saw this opening in the West, and--well, a marshalship isn't quite as high a position as that of ambassador, but--"

"The ambassador," said the girl, warmly, "doesn't call any more. He needn't ever have done so. You ought to know that. And so now you are one of these dashing Western heroes, and you ride and shoot and go into all kinds of dangers. That's different from the Washington life. You have been missed from the old crowd."

The girl's eyes, fascinated, went back, widening a little, to rest upon the glittering handcuffs.

"Don't you worry about them, miss," said the other man. "All marshals handcuff themselves to their prisoners to keep them from getting away. Mr. Easton knows his business."

"Will we see you again soon in Washington?" asked the girl.

"Not soon, I think," said Easton. "My butterfly days are over, I fear."

"I love the West," said the girl irrelevantly. Her eyes were shining softly. She looked away out the car window. She began to speak truly and simply without the gloss of style and manner: "Mamma and I spent the summer in Denver. She went home a week ago because father was slightly ill. I could live and be happy in the West. I think the air here agrees with me. Money isn't everything. But people always misunderstand things and remain stupid--"

"Say, Mr. Marshal," growled the glum-faced man. "This isn't quite fair. I'm needing a drink, and haven't had a smoke all day. Haven't you talked long enough? Take me in the smoker now, won't you? I'm half dead for a pipe."

The bound travellers rose to their feet, Easton with the same slow smile on his face.

"I can't deny a petition for tobacco," he said, lightly. "It's the one friend of the unfortunate. Good-bye, Miss Fairchild. Duty calls, you know." He held out his hand for a farewell.

"It's too bad you are not going East," she said, reclothing herself with manner and style. "But you must go on to Leavenworth, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Easton, "I must go on to Leavenworth."

The two men sidled down the aisle into the smoker.

The two passengers in a seat nearby had heard most of the conversation. Said one of them: "That marshal's a good sort of chap. Some of these Western fellows are all right."

"Pretty young to hold an office like that, isn't he?" asked the other.

"Young!" exclaimed the first speaker, "why--Oh! Didn't you catch on? Say--did you ever know an officer to handcuff a prisoner to his right hand?"

Hearts and Hands: Text Focussed Questions

1. Write a glossary to define four of the following words: **influx, frank, countenance, rouse, shrewd, acquainted, marshal, irrelevantly, sidle.**
2. Explain how Ms. Fairchild's point of view towards Easton shifts throughout the story.
3. PART A: What does the word "forestalled" most likely mean in paragraph 6?
 - A. laughed
 - B. watched
 - C. joked
 - D. interrupted
4. PART B: Which phrase from the text best proves your answer to number 2?
 - A. "Easton, with a little laugh..."
 - B. "as if amused..."
 - C. "was about to speak again when..."
 - D. "had been watching the girl's countenance..."
5. How do the words and actions of the other man affect Easton? What does this reveal about the man's character?
6. Why do you think the marshal decided to help Easton? Did Easton deserve this? Why or why not?

THE BEAR AND THE TWO TRAVELERS BY AESOP 620-560 B.C.

Aesop was a slave and story-teller who was believed to have lived in ancient Greece between 620 and 560 B.C.E. This story is part of his collection of tales known as "Aesop's Fables" which have influenced children's literature and modern storytelling culture.

As you read the text, make notes on the travellers' actions and what drives them to continue.

Two men were traveling together, when a Bear suddenly met them on their path. One of them climbed up quickly into a tree and concealed himself in the branches. The other, seeing that he must be attacked, fell flat on the ground, and when the Bear came up and felt him with his snout, and smelt him all over, he held his breath, and feigned¹ the appearance of death as much as he could. The Bear soon left him, for it is said he will not touch a dead body. When he was quite gone, the other Traveller descended from the tree, and jocularly² inquired of his friend what it was the Bear had whispered in his ear. "He gave me this advice," his companion replied. "Never travel with a friend who deserts you at the approach of danger."

1. Feign (**verb**): to fake or pretend
2. Jocularly (**adverb**): jokingly

PART A: What is the significance of the author's use of the word "companion" in the end of the story?

1. It is tragic, because the second traveller no longer considers the first his friend
2. It describes the friendship shared by the two travellers
3. It is ironic, because the first traveller was not a good friend to the second traveller
4. It is transformative, because it illustrates how the two travellers' friendship has been strengthened by the encounter with the bear

PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?

5. "Two men were traveling together..."
6. "...it is said he will not touch a dead body."
7. "jocularly inquired of his friend what it was the Bear had whispered in his ear."
8. "Never travel with a friend who deserts you..."

PART A: What is the significance of the author's use of the word "companion" in the end of the story?

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- E. "Two men were traveling together..."
- F. "...it is said he will not touch a dead body."
- G. "Jocularly inquired of his friend what it was the Bear had whispered in his ear."
- H. "Never travel with a friend who deserts you..."

How do the first traveller's actions affect the second traveller?

- I. The first traveller's actions reveal that he is not a good friend to the second traveller
- J. The first traveller's actions inspire the second traveller to risk his life
- K. The first traveller essentially leaves the second traveller to die
- L. The first traveller's actions save the second traveller's life

Which statement best describes the theme of the story?

- M. It's always better to travel alone
- N. The best way to survive a bear encounter is to play dead
- O. Good friends don't abandon each other in hard times
- P. Make sure you have a good friend before you go wandering in the woods

How is the bear characterized in this story? Is he a good friend?

THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR

In ancient Greece, people told myths to explain the ways of the world. Myths often portrayed brave heroes and vicious monsters. The ancient Greeks also believed in powerful gods who watched over Earth and intervened when they saw fit. In this particular myth, a prince from Greece's capital city of Athens travels by sea to another city, Crete, in order to fight a monster.

As you read, take notes on how Theseus' actions and characteristics help drive the plot.

King Minos of Crete was a powerful man, feared by the rulers of the lands around him. When he demanded goods or men for his great armies, they felt they had to agree. When he demanded they send tributes to honour him, they sent them without question. It was the only way they could stop him going to war with them. But his demands on Athens became too much for them to bear.

King Minos had a great palace built for himself. Inside this palace, Minos had built a giant maze, a labyrinth, and, at the centre of the maze, he kept a terrifying creature – the Minotaur. Now this was no ordinary animal; it was a monster, half man and half bull.

It was powerful and savage, and it loved to eat the flesh of the humans who had been shut into the labyrinth by King Minos. They would wander through the maze, completely lost, until at last they came face to face with the Minotaur. Not a great way to die, really.

As for Athens, Minos demanded that every year King Aegeus of Athens send him seven young men and seven young women.

“Why do we send these young people to Crete every year?” Theseus, the King’s son, asked his father. “And why is it that none of them ever return?”

“Because if we did not send them, Minos would wage war on us and it is a war that we would not win,” said King Aegeus. “And they do not return because they do not go to Crete as slaves. They go as food for the Minotaur.”

“Father, this is terrible,” shouted Theseus, “we cannot let this go on. We cannot sacrifice any more of our young citizens to this tyrant. When it is time to send the next tribute, I will go as one of them and I vow that it is the last time the Minotaur will be fed with the flesh of any of our people.”

Try as he might, his father could not persuade him to change his mind. Aegeus reminded him that every year, other young men had sworn to slay this terrible beast and they had never been seen again.

Theseus insisted that he understood the dangers but would succeed. “I will return to you, father,” cried Theseus, as the ship left the harbour wall, “and you will be proud of your son.”

“Then I wish you good luck, my son,” cried his father, “I shall keep watch for you every day. If you are successful, take down these black sails and replace them with white ones. That way I will know you are coming home safe to me.”

As the ship docked in Crete, King Minos himself came down to inspect the prisoners from Athens. He enjoyed the chance to taunt the Athenians and to humiliate them even further.

“Is this all your king has to offer this year?” he jeered. “Such puny creatures. Hardly even a snack for the mighty creature within the labyrinth. Anyway, let’s get on with it. I am not a hard-hearted man, so I will let you choose which one goes first into the Minotaur’s den. Who is it to be?”

Theseus stepped forward.

“I will go first. I am Theseus, Prince of Athens and I do not fear what is within the walls of your maze.”

“Those are brave words for one so young and so feeble. But the Minotaur will soon have you between its horns. Guards, open the labyrinth and send him in.”

Standing behind the king, listening, was his daughter, Ariadne. From the moment she set eyes on Theseus, Ariadne fell in love with him. As she listened to her father goading and taunting the young prince, she decided that she would help him. As he entered the labyrinth and the guards walked away, she called softly to him.

“Theseus, take this,” she whispered. “Even if you kill the Minotaur, you will never find your way out again.”

She threw him a great ball of string and he tied one end of it to the entrance. He smiled at her, turned and began to make his way into the maze, the string playing out behind him as he went.

Theseus walked carefully through the dark, foul-smelling passages of the labyrinth, expecting at any moment to come face-to-face with the creature. He did not have long to wait. Turning a corner, with his hands held out in front of him feeling his way, he suddenly touched what felt like a huge bony horn.

In an instant his world turned upside-down, quite literally. He was picked up between the Minotaur's horns and tossed high into the air. When he landed on the hard cold stone, he felt the animal's huge hooves come down on his chest. Every last breath seemed to be knocked out of him and he struggled to stay alive in the darkness.

But Theseus was no ordinary man. He was the son of the King, he was brave and he was stubborn. As the Minotaur bellowed in his ear and grabbed at him with its hairy arms, Theseus found a strength which he did not know he possessed.

He grabbed the animal's huge horns, and kept on twisting the great head from side to side. As the animal grew weak, Theseus gave one almighty tug on the head, turning it almost right around. The creature's neck snapped, it gurgled its last breath and fell to the floor with an enormous thud.

It was over, he had done it. The Minotaur was dead. All he had to do was make his way out of...and then he realised the awful truth. In the struggle, he had let go of the string, his lifeline. Theseus felt all over the floor in the pitch darkness and kept thinking he had found it, only to realise that all he had was a long wiry hair from the Minotaur.

Despair set in and Theseus wondered if this was where his life would end, down in the dark, all alone, next to the stinking body. Then, his hand brushed a piece of string and, with a whoop of delight, he knew he had found the thread which would lead him back out. As he neared the entrance of the labyrinth, the darkness began to fade and he made out the figure of Ariadne, waiting for his return.

"You must take me back to Athens with you," she cried, "My father will kill me when he finds out that I have helped you."

"But of course you must come with us," said Theseus, "it would be cruel to leave you here." Quickly and quietly, they unfurled the great black sails of their ship and headed for home.

"I cannot believe how my life has changed," said Ariadne, as they sailed across the calm seas towards Athens. "To think that I am free of my cruel father and that I will soon be married to a great prince."

"Married?" said Theseus, "Oh, yes, that will be...er... wonderful." But in truth, Theseus did not really find her attractive.

So, when their ship docked at an island on their way home, to collect fresh water, Theseus sent Ariadne off to find bread and fruit. The moment she was gone, he set sail and left her on the island. Now, you might think that this was a bad way to reward someone who had helped him and had saved him from certain death.

The Gods clearly thought the same thing, for they had a further horror in store for him, as a punishment for his ungrateful treatment of the young girl.

In his haste to get away, Theseus forgot to change his sails to white. King Aegeus, waiting on the headland, saw the ship approaching with its black sails flying in the wind.

"My son has failed and he is dead," he cried. And in despair, he flung himself from the cliff into the raging waters below. From that day on, the sea was named in memory of Theseus' father, and to this day, it is known as the Aegean Sea.

Theseus and the Minotaur: Text-focused Questions

1. Write a glossary of definitions for four of the following words: **savage, puny, feeble, goad, bellow, despair, unfurl, haste**. Use the sentence that they appear in to help you.
2. PART A: What does the word “tyrant” most closely mean as it is used in paragraph 7?
 - A. A person who runs a country
 - B. A leader who torments people
 - C. A soldier who is ready to fight
 - D. An innocent young citizen
3. PART B: Which quote from later in the story best supports your answer to Part A?
 - A. “As the ship docked in Crete, King Minos himself came down to inspect the prisoners from Athens.” (Paragraph 11)
 - B. “He enjoyed the change to taunt the Athenians and to humiliate them even further.” (Paragraph 11)
 - C. “Those are brave words for one so young and so feeble.” (Paragraph 15)
 - D. “Standing behind the king, listening, was his daughter, Ariadne.” (Paragraph 16)
4. If it weren’t for Ariadne, do you think Theseus would have been able to get out of the maze? Use details about the maze and Theseus’ character to support your ideas.

DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE: AN EXCERPT FROM ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND BY LEWIS CARROLL 1865

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-1898), better known by his penname Lewis Carroll, was an English writer, mathematician, and Anglican minister. His best known work is *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* which tells the tale of a young girl who falls into a world of nonsense.

As you read, take notes on how Carroll presents the character of Alice within the text.

Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, ‘and what is the use of a book,’ thought Alice ‘without pictures or conversation?’

So she was considering in her own mind (as well as she could, for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid), whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.

There was nothing so very remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so very much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself, ‘Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be late!’ (when she thought it over afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural); but when the Rabbit actually took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and fortunately was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge.

In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again.

The rabbit-hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way, and then dipped suddenly down, so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down a very deep well.

Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her and to wonder what was going to happen next. First, she tried to look down and make out what she was coming to, but it was too dark to see anything; then she looked at the sides of the well, and noticed that they were filled with cupboards and book-shelves; here and there she saw maps and pictures hung upon pegs. She took down a jar from one of the shelves as she passed; it was labelled 'ORANGE MARMALADE', but to her great disappointment it was empty: she did not like to drop the jar for fear of killing somebody, so managed to put it into one of the cupboards as she fell past it.

'Well!' thought Alice to herself, 'after such a fall as this, I shall think nothing of tumbling down stairs! How brave they'll all think me at home! Why, I wouldn't say anything about it, even if I fell off the top of the house!' (Which was very likely true.)

Down, down, down. Would the fall never come to an end! 'I wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time?' she said aloud. 'I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth. Let me see: that would be four thousand miles down, I think—' (for, you see, Alice had learnt several things of this sort in her lessons in the schoolroom, and though this was not a very good opportunity for showing off her knowledge, as there was no one to listen to her, still it was good practice to say it over) '—yes, that's about the right distance—but then I wonder what Latitude or Longitude I've got to?' (Alice had no idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but thought they were nice grand words to say.)

Presently she began again. 'I wonder if I shall fall right through the earth! How funny it'll seem to come out among the people that walk with their heads downward! The Antipathies, I think—' (she was rather glad there was no one listening, this time, as it didn't sound at all the right word) '—but I shall have to ask them what the name of the country is, you know. Please, Ma'am, is this New Zealand or Australia?' (and she tried to curtsy as she spoke—fancy curtseying as you're falling through the air! Do you think you could manage it?) 'And what an ignorant little girl she'll think me for asking! No, it'll never do to ask: perhaps I shall see it written up somewhere.'

Down, down, down. There was nothing else to do, so Alice soon began talking again. 'Dinah'll miss me very much to-night, I should think!' (Dinah was the cat.) 'I hope they'll remember her saucer of milk at tea-time. Dinah my dear! I wish you were down here with me! There are no mice in the air, I'm afraid, but you might catch a bat, and that's very like a mouse, you know. But do cats eat bats, I wonder?' And here Alice began to get rather sleepy, and went on saying to herself, in a dreamy sort of way, 'Do cats eat bats? Do cats eat bats?' and sometimes, 'Do bats eat cats?' for, you see, as she couldn't answer either question, it didn't much matter which way she put it. She felt that she was dozing off, and had just begun to dream that she was walking hand in hand with Dinah, and saying to her very earnestly, 'Now, Dinah, tell me the truth: did you ever eat a bat?' when suddenly, thump! thump! down she came upon a heap of sticks and dry leaves, and the fall was over.

Alice was not a bit hurt, and she jumped up on to her feet in a moment: she looked up, but it was all dark overhead; before her was another long passage, and the White Rabbit was still in sight, hurrying down it. There was not a moment to be lost: away went Alice like the wind, and was just in time to hear it say, as it turned a corner, 'Oh my ears and whiskers, how late it's getting!' She was close behind it when she turned the corner, but the Rabbit was no longer to be seen: she found herself in a long, low hall, which was lit up by a row of lamps hanging from the roof.

There were doors all round the hall, but they were all locked; and when Alice had been all the way down one side and up the other, trying every door, she walked sadly down the middle, wondering how she was ever to get out again.

Suddenly she came upon a little three-legged table, all made of solid glass; there was nothing on it except a tiny golden key, and Alice's first thought was that it might belong to one of the doors of the hall; but, alas! either the locks were too large, or the key was too small, but at any rate it would not open any of them. However, on the second time round, she came upon a low curtain she had not noticed before, and behind it

was a little door about fifteen inches high: she tried the little golden key in the lock, and to her great delight it fitted!

Alice opened the door and found that it led into a small passage, not much larger than a rat-hole: she knelt down and looked along the passage into the loveliest garden you ever saw. How she longed to get out of that dark hall, and wander about among those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains, but she could not even get her head through the doorway; 'and even if my head would go through,' thought poor Alice, 'it would be of very little use without my shoulders. Oh, how I wish I could shut up like a telescope! I think I could, if I only know how to begin.' For, you see, so many out-of-the-way things had happened lately, that Alice had begun to think that very few things indeed were really impossible.

There seemed to be no use in waiting by the little door, so she went back to the table, half hoping she might find another key on it, or at any rate a book of rules for shutting people up like telescopes: this time she found a little bottle on it, ('which certainly was not here before,' said Alice,) and round the neck of the bottle was a paper label, with the words 'DRINK ME' beautifully printed on it in large letters.

It was all very well to say 'Drink me,' but the wise little Alice was not going to do that in a hurry. 'No, I'll look first,' she said, 'and see whether it's marked "poison" or not'; for she had read several nice little histories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts and other unpleasant things, all because they would not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them: such as, that a red-hot poker will burn you if you hold it too long; and that if you cut your finger very deeply with a knife, it usually bleeds; and she had never forgotten that, if you drink much from a bottle marked 'poison,' it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later.

However, this bottle was not marked 'poison,' so Alice ventured to taste it, and finding it very nice, (it had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavour of cherry-tart, custard, pine-apple, roast turkey, toffee, and hot buttered toast,) she very soon finished it off.

'What a curious feeling!' said Alice; 'I must be shutting up like a telescope.'

And so it was indeed: she was now only ten inches high, and her face brightened up at the thought that she was now the right size for going through the little door into that lovely garden. First, however, she waited for a few minutes to see if she was going to shrink any further: she felt a little nervous about this; 'for it might end, you know,' said Alice to herself, 'in my going out altogether, like a candle. I wonder what I should be like then?' And she tried to fancy what the flame of a candle is like after the candle is blown out, for she could not remember ever having seen such a thing.

After a while, finding that nothing more happened, she decided on going into the garden at once; but, alas for poor Alice! when she got to the door, she found she had forgotten the little golden key, and when she went back to the table for it, she found she could not possibly reach it: she could see it quite plainly through the glass, and she tried her best to climb up one of the legs of the table, but it was too slippery; and when she had tired herself out with trying, the poor little thing sat down and cried.

'Come, there's no use in crying like that!' said Alice to herself, rather sharply; 'I advise you to leave off this minute!' She generally gave herself very good advice, (though she very seldom followed it), and sometimes she scolded herself so severely as to bring tears into her eyes; and once she remembered trying to box her own ears for having cheated herself in a game of croquet she was playing against herself, for this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people. 'But it's no use now,' thought poor Alice, 'to pretend to be two people! Why, there's hardly enough of me left to make one respectable person!'

Soon her eye fell on a little glass box that was lying under the table: she opened it, and found in it a very small cake, on which the words 'EAT ME' were beautifully marked in currants. 'Well, I'll eat it,' said Alice,

‘and if it makes me grow larger, I can reach the key; and if it makes me grow smaller, I can creep under the door; so either way I’ll get into the garden, and I don’t care which happens!’

She ate a little bit, and said anxiously to herself, ‘Which way? Which way?’, holding her hand on the top of her head to feel which way it was growing, and she was quite surprised to find that she remained the same size: to be sure, this generally happens when one eats cake, but Alice had got so much into the way of expecting nothing but out-of-the-way things to happen, that it seemed quite dull and stupid for life to go on in the common way.

So she set to work, and very soon finished off the cake.

Down the Rabbit Hole: Text Focussed Questions

1. Choose five words in the text to define. Use them in a paragraph about a topic of your choice.
2. What does the phrase “away went Alice like the wind” most likely mean, as used in paragraph 11?
 - A. Alice becomes invisible.
 - B. Alice moves very quickly, possibly running.
 - C. Alice’s movements become light and airy.
 - D. Alice falls fast through the empty air.
3. How does Alice respond to falling down an impossibly long rabbit hole?
4. How would you describe Alice’s reasoning skills within this extract? Do they seem logical or silly, and why? Use evidence from the text in your answer.

THE HOUSE DOG AND THE WOLF BY GAIL TERP 2015

Aesop was a slave and story-teller who was believed to have lived in ancient Greece between 620 and 560 BCE. This story is part of his collection of tales known as “Aesop’s Fables,” which has influenced modern storytelling culture.

As you read this classic story, take notes about the things that are worth sacrificing for.

It had been a long and miserable winter for Wolf. His hunting had not gone well for many weeks and his ribs were nearly sticking through his skin.

One night, as Wolf was out seeking something to eat, he met a house dog.

“You are looking very well, Cousin,” said Wolf. “Here I am, near starvation, and you are clearly well-fed. What is your secret?”

“Oh, there is no secret,” said Dog. “I simply have a wonderful job. I guard my master’s house and keep away any thieves. In return, he treats me very well.”

“Lucky for you! If only I had it so easy. For me, life is a constant struggle.”

“But you can have this grand life, too,” said Dog. “Just travel with me to my master’s house and help me keep the thieves away.”

“Happily,” said Wolf. “I’d love to have a belly full of food for a change.”

While they were trotting along together, Wolf spotted a mark on Dog’s neck. Curious, he asked what had caused it.

“Oh, that’s nothing much,” replied Dog. “Perhaps my collar was a little tight.”

“You wear a collar?” Wolf backed away from Dog.

“That’s nothing to worry about,” said Dog. “I wear a collar so my master can hook my chain to it.”

“You are chained?” cried Wolf in surprise. “You mean you are not free to go wherever you please?”

“Not exactly,” said the dog, looking embarrassed. “You see, my master thinks I’m a bit wild and so he ties me up in the daytime. But he lets me run free at night.”

Wolf backed a few more steps away from Dog.

“Wolf, it’s a good deal,” said Dog. “I get plenty of sleep during the day, and then I am free at night. I am my master’s favourite and he feeds me very well.”

Wolf turned and started to walk toward the forest.

“But wait, where are you going?” cried Dog.

“Good night to you, poor Cousin,” said Wolf. “You are welcome to your grand life—and your chains. As for me, I will keep my freedom.”

Moral: *Lean freedom is better than fat slavery.*

The House Dog and the Wolf: Text-focussed Questions:

1. PART A: What is Dog’s opinion of his own life? Use evidence to explain your ideas.
 - A. Dog is upset that he is a slave to his master.
 - B. Overall, Dog is happy with his situation in life.
 - C. Dog envies Wolf’s freedom.
 - D. Dog feels that his life is better than Wolf’s.
2. PART A: When Wolf turns to leave Dog, what is the tone of his closing line in paragraph 18? Explain the reason for your answer.
 - A. Sad and disappointed
 - B. Sympathetic and concerned
 - C. Judgmental and disapproving
 - D. Elated and joyful
3. Do you agree with the moral of this story, “Lean freedom is better than fat slavery”? Explain your answer.
4. Which is more important: freedom or security? Explain your answer using evidence from this text, your own life, or other art or literature.

Oliver Twist- Chapter 50 by Charles Dickens

As you read the extract, make notes on how the writer presents London.

Near to that part of the Thames on which the church at Rotherhithe abuts, where the buildings on the banks are dirtiest and the vessels on the river blackest with the dust of colliers and the smoke of close-built low-roofed houses, there exists the filthiest, the strangest, the most extraordinary of the many localities that are hidden in London, wholly unknown, even by name, to the great mass of its inhabitants.

To reach this place, the visitor has to penetrate through a maze of close, narrow, and muddy streets, thronged by the roughest and poorest of waterside people, and devoted to the traffic they may be supposed to occasion. The cheapest and least delicate provisions are heaped in the shops; the coarsest and commonest articles of wearing apparel dangle at the salesman's door, and stream from the house-parapet and windows. jostling with unemployed labourers of the lowest class, ballast-heavers, coal-whippers, brazen women, ragged children, and the raff and refuse of the river, he makes his way with difficulty along, assailed by offensive sights and smells from the narrow alleys which branch off on the right and left, and deafened by the clash of ponderous waggons that bear great piles of merchandise from the stacks of warehouses that rise from every corner. Arriving, at length, in streets remoter and less-frequented than those through which he has passed, he walks beneath tottering house-fronts projecting over the pavement, dismantled walls that seem to totter as he passes, chimneys half crushed half hesitating to fall, windows guarded by rusty iron bars that time and dirt have almost eaten away, every imaginable sign of desolation and neglect.

In such a neighbourhood, beyond Dockhead in the Borough of Southwark, stands Jacob's Island, surrounded by a muddy ditch, six or eight feet deep and fifteen or twenty wide when the tide is in, once called Mill Pond, but known in the days of this story as Folly Ditch. It is a creek or inlet from the Thames, and can always be filled at high water by opening the sluices at the Lead Mills from which it took its old name. At such times, a stranger, looking from one of the wooden bridges thrown across it at Mill Lane, will see the inhabitants of the houses on either side lowering from their back doors and windows, buckets, pails, domestic utensils of all kinds, in which to haul the water up; and when his eye is turned from these operations to the houses themselves, his utmost astonishment will be excited by the scene before him. Crazy wooden galleries common to the backs of half-a-dozen houses, with holes from which to look upon the slime beneath; windows, broken and patched, with poles thrust out, on which to dry the linen that is never there; rooms so small, so filthy, so confined, that the air would seem too tainted even for the dirt and squalor which they shelter; wooden chambers thrusting themselves out above the mud, and threatening to fall into it- as some have done; dirt-besmeared walls and decaying foundations; every repulsive lineament of poverty, every loathsome indication of filth, rot, and garbage; all these ornament the banks of Folly Ditch.

In Jacob's Island, the warehouses are roofless and empty; the walls are crumbling down; the windows are windows no more; the doors are failing into the streets; the chimneys are blackened, but they yield no smoke. Thirty or forty years ago, before losses and chancery suits came upon it, it was a thriving place; but now it is a desolate island indeed. The houses have no owners; they are broken open, and entered upon by those who have the courage; and there they live, and there they die. They must have powerful motives for a secret residence, or be reduced to a destitute condition indeed, who seek a refuge in Jacob's Island.

Oliver Twist Text Focussed Questions:

1. Define four of the following words: **sluices, destitute, apparel, ponderous, tottering, desolation, astonishment, confined, squalor.**
2. What are your first impressions of Jacob's Island? Include evidence in your answer.
3. Why do you think the writer takes us on a journey through other areas before describing Jacob's Island? (you should think about the structure here when writing your answer).
4. What does the last line, '***They must have powerful motives for a secret residence, or be reduced to a destitute condition indeed, who seek a refuge in Jacob's Island'*** mean?

5. The Island is not an Island at all but a specific area within London; how do you think it got that name?
 6. How does the writer show the poverty of London at the time? Include evidence within your answer.
-

The Book Thief by Markus Zusak (2005)

Set during World War II, this is the story of Liesel, a foster girl living in Germany. Liesel scratches out a poor existence for herself by stealing. One day she comes across something she can't resist– books. With the help of her foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbours during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement.

As you read the extract, make notes on how the writer has created an engaging opening for his novel.

First the colours.

Then the humans.

That's usually how I see things.

Or at least, how I try.

HERE IS A SMALL FACT

You are going to die.

I am in all truthfulness attempting to be cheerful about this whole topic, though most people find themselves hindered in believing me, no matter my protestations. Please, trust me. I most definitely can be cheerful. I can be amiable. Agreeable. Affable. And that's only the As. Just don't ask me to be nice. Nice has nothing to do with me.

REACTION TO THE

AFOREMENTIONED FACT

Does this worry you?

I urge you-don't be afraid. I'm nothing if not fair.

–Of course, an introduction.

A beginning.

Where are my manners?

I could introduce myself properly, but it's not really necessary. You will know me well enough and soon enough, depending on a diverse range of variables. It suffices to say that at some point in time, I will be standing over you, as genially as possible. Your soul will be in my arms. A colour will be perched on my shoulder. I will carry you gently away.

The Book Thief Text Focused Questions:

1. Define four of the following words and use them in sentences of your own: aforementioned, hindered, protestations, affable, diverse, variables.
2. What is the narrative within the text- first or third person? How does this have an effect on your opinion of the character?

3. Find three techniques that the writer uses to hook you as a reader. Which one do you think is most effective and why?
4. Who do you think the narrator is and why? Use evidence to explain your ideas.

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury 1953

This extract is from the opening of a novel by Ray Bradbury. Published in 1953, the novel is set in the future. In this section Guy Montag is a fireman who is in charge of the burning of books.

As you read, make notes on your feelings towards the character Montag.

It was a pleasure to burn.

It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and *changed*. With the brass nozzle in his fists, with this great python spitting its venomous kerosene upon the world, the blood pounded in his head, and his hands were the hands of some amazing conductor playing all the symphonies of blazing and burning to bring down the tatters and charcoal ruins of history. With his symbolic helmet numbered 451 on his stolid head, and his eyes all orange flame with the thought of what came next, he flicked the igniter and the house jumped up in a gorging fire that burned the evening sky red and yellow and black. He strode in a swarm of fireflies. He wanted above all, like the old joke, to shove a marshmallow on a stick in the furnace, while the flapping pigeon-winged books died on the porch and lawn of the house. While the books went up in sparkling whirls and blew away on a wind turned dark with burning.

Montag grinned the fierce grin of all men singed and driven back by flame.

He knew that when he returned to the firehouse, he might wink at himself, a minstrel man, burntorked, in the mirror. Later, going to sleep, he would feel the fiery smile still gripped by his face muscles, in the dark. It never went away, that smile, it never ever went away, as long as he remembered.

He hung up his black-beetle-coloured helmet and shined it, he hung his flameproof jacket neatly; he showered luxuriously, and then, whistling, hands in pockets, walked across the upper floor of the fire station and fell down the hole. At the last moment, when disaster seemed positive, he pulled his hands from his pockets and broke his fall by grasping the golden pole. He slid to a squeaking halt, the heels one inch from the concrete floor downstairs.

He walked out of the fire station and along the midnight street toward the subway where the silent, air-propelled train slid soundlessly down its lubricated flue in the earth and let him out with a great puff of warm air an to the cream-tiled escalator rising to the suburb.

Whistling, he let the escalator waft him into the still night air. He walked toward the corner, thinking little at all about nothing in particular. Before he reached the corner, however, he slowed as if a wind had sprung up from nowhere, as if someone had called his name. The last few nights he had had the most uncertain feelings about the sidewalk just around the corner here, moving in the starlight toward his house. He had felt that a moment before his making the turn, someone had been there. The air seemed charged with a special calm as if someone had waited there, quietly, and only a moment before he came, simply turned to a shadow and let him through. Perhaps his nose detected a faint

perfume, perhaps the skin on the backs of his hands, on his face, felt the temperature rise at this one spot where a person's standing might raise the immediate atmosphere ten degrees for an instant. There was no understanding it. Each time he made the turn, he saw only the white, unused, buckling sidewalk, with perhaps, on one night, something vanishing swiftly across a lawn before he could focus his eyes or speak.

Fahrenheit 451 Text-Focussed Questions:

1. What are your first impressions of Montag? Use evidence to explain your ideas.
2. Find a simile within the text. What is the effect here for the reader?
3. Re-read the final paragraph. How does the writer create tension here? Use evidence to explain your ideas.
4. Why do you think Montag finds pleasure in burning books?
5. What would a life without books look like? Include your own ideas but also think about how the world might operate differently if people did not have access to read.

Lord of the Flies by William Golding 1951

Smoke was rising here and there among the creepers that festooned the dead or dying trees. As they watched, a flash of fire appeared at the root of one wisp, and then the smoke thickened. Small flames stirred at the trunk of a tree and crawled away through leaves and brushwood, dividing and increasing. One patch touched a tree trunk and scrambled up like a bright squirrel. The smoke increased, sifted, rolled outwards. The squirrel leapt on the wings of the wind and clung to another standing tree, eating downwards. Beneath the dark canopy of leaves and smoke the fire laid hold on the forest and began to gnaw. Acres of black and yellow smoke rolled steadily toward the sea. At the sight of the flames and the irresistible course of the fire, the boys broke into shrill, excited cheering. The flames, as though they were a kind of wild life, crept as a jaguar creeps on its belly toward a line of birch-like saplings that fledged an outcrop of the pink rock. They flapped at the first of the trees, and the branches grew a brief foliage of fire. The heart of flame leapt nimbly across the gap between the trees and then went swinging and flaring along the whole row of them. Beneath the capering boys a quarter of a mile square of forest was savage with smoke and flame. The separate noises of the fire merged into a drum-roll that seemed to shake the mountain.

Lord of the Flies Text-focussed Questions:

1. Define four of the following words: festooned, scrambled, sifted, gnaw, irresistible, nimbly, capering.
2. Find one example of the flames being personified within the extract. Explode the quotation to think about the visualisations created by the words.
3. What do the fire and the boys have in common? Use evidence in your answer to explain your ideas.
4. How would you describe the mood of the extract? Why?
5. How is the description of the fire in this text different to Fahrenheit 451? Include evidence from both texts to explain your ideas.